

Land use encroachment, economic issues and environmental considerations have in recent years led to a significant loss in the number of airports in the region. The RASP indicates that, since 1969, 10 public-use airports have permanently closed, including Bellevue, Campell, Cedar Grove, Duvall, Enumclaw, Green Valley, Issaquah, Martha Lake, and Wax Orchard. The closure of these airports has further increased pressure on the remaining airports and makes their continued operation even more important.

Renton Municipal Airport actually counts as two airports in the regional system; one is the Will Rogers–Wiley Post Memorial Seaplane Base and the other is the airport itself. Both are operated as a single entity by the City of Renton through its Planning, Building & Public Works Department.

The seaplane facility is unique in the region as the other nearby seaplane bases are privately owned and not open to all users. It also has historic significance. It is so named to commemorate the great flier Wiley Post and his companion, the part-Oklahoma, part Cherokee and famous humorist and journalist, Will Rogers. Wiley Post twice, in 1931 and 1933, set the record for flying around the world, the second time in 7 days and 19 hours. Post and Rogers departed from the Renton seaplane facility to make the last, fatal trip, to Barrow, Alaska in 1935.

The Will Rogers–Wiley Post Memorial Seaplane Base is the only publicly owned seaplane facility in the region and serves a role in taking passengers to the San Juan Islands and to Canada's Gulf Islands and Vancouver Island.

### **4.3.2 Pilot Licenses**

#### **4.3.2.1 Recent Trends in Pilot Licenses**

The number of active U.S. pilot certificates declined slowly over the past decade. In 1990, there were a total of 702,659 pilot certificates in the United States. By 1998, this total had fallen to 618,298, an average annual loss of 1.6%.

This decline in the number of active pilot certificates reflects a number of factors, including the recession in the early part of the decade, the aging of the pilot population, and the increasing expense of flying. Figure 4-2, below, outlines the changes in pilot certificates during the 1990s.